

Audio Podcast Script
Communication Plans Revisited
Julia Koppich, Rob Meyers, Cindy Prince

New Communications Challenges for TIF Grantees
Cindy Prince

Interviewer: This is Courtney Rowland with the Center for Educator Compensation Reform and I'm joined now by one of our technical assistance providers, Cindy Prince of Vanderbilt University. Thanks for joining me today to talk about Communications.

Cindy: You're welcome. Thank you for inviting me.

Interviewer: Cindy, you just finished presenting your session on New Communications Challenges for TIF Grantees. In that session, you shared some lessons learned about communications strategies. What are some of the lessons that anyone implementing a performance pay program should consider?

Cindy: Well, first, when communicating with participants and other key stakeholders, it's very important to choose language carefully. Try to avoid jargon and acronyms, and define technical terms. It's critical to make sure everything is explained clearly and accurately.

Second, give the new compensation program a name and an identity. The plan name should be distinct from other programs offered in the district or state.

Third, remember that change can be uncomfortable, and creating a new compensation plan can be controversial, so try to anticipate the concerns that will likely be raised by critics and skeptics. With nearly three dozen TIF grants, there's a wealth of information available now about the kinds of questions grantees can expect to encounter. If you're prepared to answer these questions, you may be able to head off challenges that may arise.

Finally, communicate with the media early and often. Consider selecting one or more point persons to be contacts with the media, or developing a working relationship with local newspapers and television and radio stations. Or you can meet with editorial boards and education writers at the outset. You can prepare periodic news releases about your project.

Interviewer: What about lessons learned from personal experience? What are some things grantees have encountered that can help them to improve their communications plans?

Cindy: One of the things you may find is that communication needs change over time as you implement your compensation system. For example, you may find that participants need reassurance about the sustainability of the program if there are changes in the leadership or the level of resources changes. Focus groups and surveys are two ways that grantees can determine where additional communication is required or clarification is needed. Grantees should also take time to reflect on lessons learned and adjust communications plans as needed, particularly after

making a payout. Think about any communications issues that came up, how they were resolved, and ways to ensure that all stakeholders understand how your program operates.

Interviewer: Cindy, thank so much for joining us today.

Cindy: You're welcome. Thank you for having me.

Interviewer: Cindy Prince and Julia Koppich co-authored a *Guide to Implementation* module on Communications and Stakeholder Engagement that explores all of these issues and more. The *Guide* can be found on the CECR website, under the Resources section. And you can find Cindy's complete PowerPoint presentation from her session "Communication Plans Revisited: New Communications Challenges for TIF Grantees" on the CECR website under the Events section. Select the 2009 Annual Grantee Meeting.

This is Courtney Rowland for CECR.